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Happy Birthday to the CIA

IT PROBABLY slipped your mind but the Central Intelligence Agency celebrated its 20th anniversary the other day. On September 18 officials and employees of the CIA participated in an award ceremony at the organization's headquarters at Langley, Va. Apparently it was a very folksy gathering brimming over with good fellowship. Employees received certificates of merit for 10, 15 and 20 years of distinguished service to the Republic. The climax of the evening was a eulogy to the agency delivered by Vice President Hubert Humphrey. "The American people feel better because there is a CIA," Mr. Humphrey declared.

Dispelled by the radiance of the occasion was the miasma of mistrust that has surrounded the agency in the past year. The CIA has been accused by some over-fastidious critics of inciting revolutions, fomenting subversion in foreign countries, plotting assassinations, spying on domestic organizations and infiltrating religious, social, and labor groups—of everything, in fact, but stealing chickens. Well, no organization is perfect. President Johnson put it very well in the letter read at the anniversary ceremony. He said America depended on the CIA for guidance in making decisions affecting the course of history. He praised the CIA for its fierce dedication to truth and the

democratic ideal. "I believe our trust is well placed," Mr. Johnson affirmed.

Just a few days before these sonorous sentiments were intoned some spillover U.S. Senators passed a bill over the objections of the CIA by a vote of 79 to 4. The legislation prohibits federal agencies from asking their employees about their finances, religion, sex activities or family relationships. The CIA had opposed the bill on the ground that it would be made vulnerable in protecting itself against penetration by enemy agents. Happily, the safety of the Republic has been preserved by a partial exemption in the bill which permits the CIA, along with two other investigative agencies, to administer lie detector and psychological tests during job interviews in the interest of national security. We wonder, however, if those federal employees who have been spared invasion of their private lives by Big Brother feel pleasure along with Mr. Humphrey that there is a CIA.

Shortly after the revelations early this year of clandestine CIA subsidies to domestic organizations, the Vice President declaimed in a speech at Stanford University: "I am not at all happy about what the CIA has been doing." Obviously, Mr. Humphrey agrees with Emerson's dictum that a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.